



STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING AND TOUR

Abandoned Mine Field Day. The State Soil and Water Conservation Committee was invited to attend a Field Day discussion hosted by the [Iowa Learning Farms](#) on September 7, 2017, about the Logan abandoned mine reclamation project located near Bussey, Iowa. Work on this 100-acre site began in 2014 and was finished in 2016. Included in the project was the planting of a pollinator mix to attract Monarch butterflies as a project sponsored by the [Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium](#) at Iowa State University. A portion of the funding was from a federal grant awarded in 2015 by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs) for \$227,000. The grant was awarded to establish wildlife habitat on Iowa's private lands. The grant supplied funding for the Buffer Initiative Program, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the Abandoned Mine Land Program, and the Urban Conservation Program. The photo on the left details the condition of the land before the reclamation, and the photo on the right details the condition afterwards.



Mussel Study Presentation. The State Soil and Water Conservation Committee met in Oskaloosa after the Field Day event. Jennifer Kurt from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gave a presentation on her five-year study of the mussel population. This included a discussion of the Buffalo Creek Watershed in Buchanan County, where 93 conservation practices were implemented, reducing the amount of sediment to the watershed by over 4,000 tons. This improved the water quality, and the population of native mussels has increased. Another benefit was that five segments of Buffalo Creek were removed from Iowa's Impaired Waterbodies List, which is submitted every two years to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Palmer Amaranth Plant. Jim Gillespie, Director of the Soil Conservation and Water Quality Division of DALs, provided an update on the Palmer amaranth plant, which is an invasive species that was first detected in Iowa last year. As of September 1, 2017, there have been minimal sightings of the plant. The problem with the plant is that it grows quickly; additionally, one plant can produce up to 500,000 seeds, which causes it to spread quickly. Information about the plant is available at the Iowa State University Outreach and Extension [website](#).

Water Quality Initiative. Director Gillespie also reported that the Water Quality Initiatives Statewide Practices funding was very successful. The DALs allocated \$5.0 million to over 2,500 farmers, over 1,000 of whom were first-time participants. This included producers in 98 counties. Matching funds are estimated at \$8.4 million. The majority of the practices will include implementing cover crops on approximately 280,000 acres.

Federal Conservation Projects Update. Kevin McCall, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), provided some information on federal programs in Iowa. For FFY 2017, over 1,300 acres were

enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and 186,000 acres were enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program.

Next Meeting. If needed, there will be a conference call meeting on October 2, 2017. The next scheduled meeting is November 5, 2017, in Des Moines.

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